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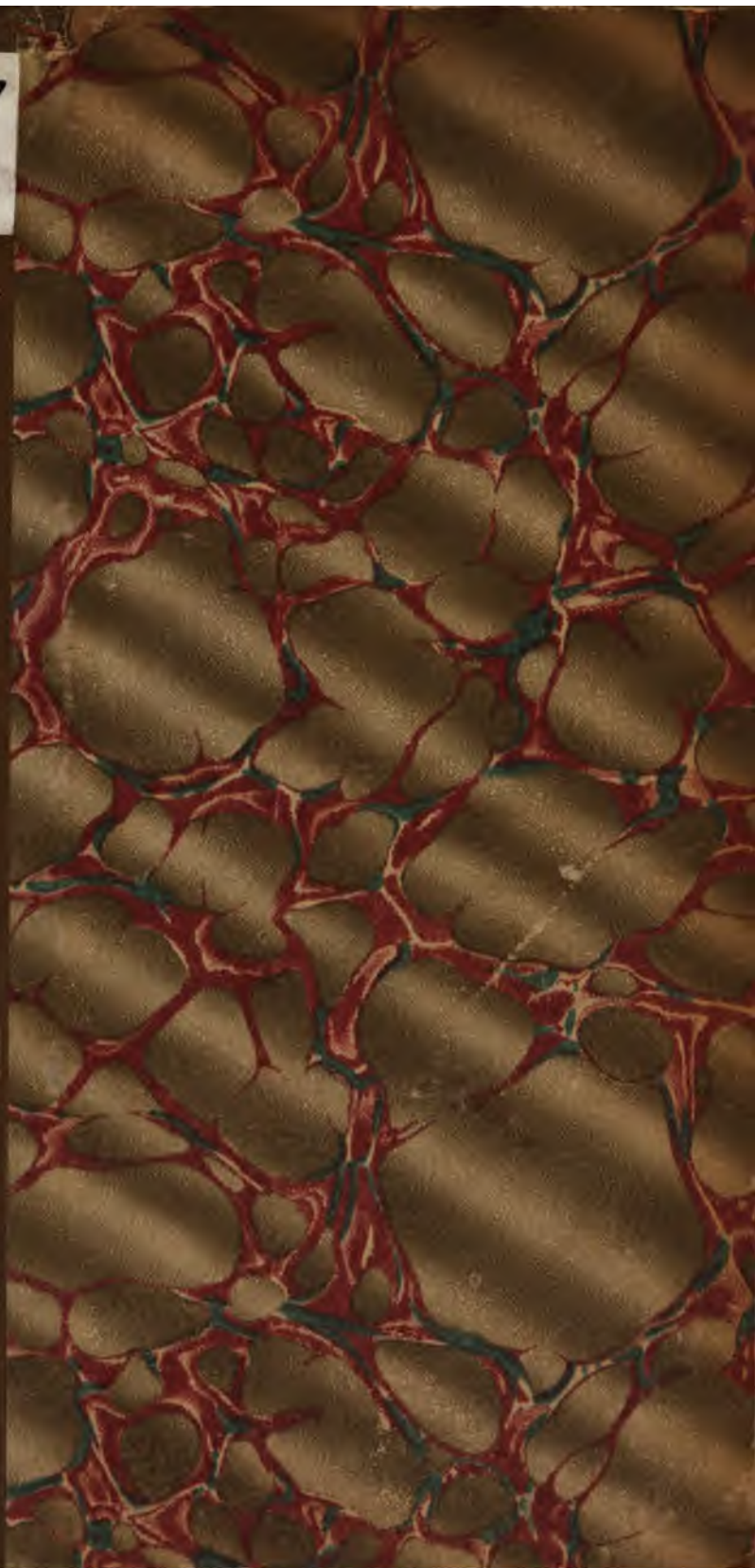
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Adams - Queen Jane - 1874.



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THE BEQUEST OF
EVERT JANSEN WENDELL
CLASS OF 1882
OF NEW YORK

1918



QUEEN JANE.

AN HISTORICAL TRAGEDY,

IN FIVE ACTS,

BY

C. WARREN ADAMS.



London:

EFFINGHAM WILSON, ROYAL EXCHANGE.

1874.

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HARVARD COLLEGE LIBRARY
FROM
THE BEQUEST OF
EVERETT JACOB WENDELL
1870

TO MY WIFE.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

DUKE OF NORTHUMBERLAND.

DUKE OF SUFFOLK.

MARQUIS OF WINCHESTER.

EARL OF PEMBROKE.

EARL OF ARUNDEL.

LORD GUILFORD DUDLEY.

MASTER AYLMER.

FECKENHAM, ABBOT OF WESTMINSTER.

REGINALD TYLNEY.

CAPTAIN OF NORTHUMBERLAND'S TROOP.

OFFICER OF THE GUARD.

GRIFFITHS.

ANTHONY.

RALPH.

USHER.

DUCHESS OF NORTHUMBERLAND.

DUCHESS OF SUFFOLK.

LADY JANE GREY.

ELIZABETH TYLNEY.

KATHERINE ELEYN.

SOLDIERS, PAGES, ATTENDANTS, COURTIER'S,
PEASANTS, ETC.

SCENE: LONDON AND BRADGATE.

QUEEN JANE.

ACT I.

SCENE 1.—*River Terrace of the Palace at Greenwich.
Practicable steps leading to the Thames—Part of Palace
front with sun-dial.—Guard drawn up waiting for royal
barge.—Earls of PEMBROKE and ARUNDEL, &c.*

Capt. of Guard Stand to your arms. The King!

Guards God Save King Edward!

Arundel God help him, rather.

Pembroke Truly Arundel,

I never hear that cry but, to my ears,

It seems the last.

Capt. Stand back!

Voices The King! the King!

[*Flourish of trumpets. The royal barge comes alongside
the stairs, and K. EDWARD is lifted from it in a litter,
and carried across the stage to the Palace attended by
courtiers. NORTHUMBERLAND in a rich suit of brown
velvet walks, cap in hand, beside the litter, stooping
apparently in close conference with the King.*]

Guards Long live King Edward.

Pem. (to Ar.) Mark Northumberland.

Ar. He never leaves the King.

Pem. Nor ever will
Till his work's done. And then—there'll be no King.

[*Ereunt* K. EDWARD, NORTHUMBERLAND, *Attendants*,

Ar. A sorry sight. [*Guards, &c.*]

Pem. By my soul, Arundel,
The sorriest part of it to my poor eyes,
Was not yon litter, nor the poor sick boy
Who languished in it, 'twas that vampyre-duke,
Fanning his velvet wings—

Ar. Hush, Pembroke, hush !
Northumberland—

Pem. A murrain on Northumberland !

Ar. With all my heart ; I'd rather see the devil,
Horns, hooves, and all, beside the Royal chair.
But—caution, Pembroke

Pem. In thy Eastern travels
Hast ever seen a fine full-feathered vulture
With falling ruff, hooked beak, and griping claw,
Flapping, bare-headed, round some dying lion
Until the royal eyes should just film o'er
And supper time be come ?

Ar. My lord ! my lord !

Pem. Pshaw ! I could preach you half the morning long
Upon this text.

Ar. And find your “lastly,” Pembroke,
On Tower Hill. Hush ! man, in Heaven's name
We are not alone (*enter page*)

Page. My lord of Arundel—(*gives letter and exit*).

Ar. Ha ! 'Tis from Winchester—Read, Pembroke, read.
This should bode action.

Pem. (*reading*) “On the stroke of four
Be on the terrace.—” Faith ! he chooses well
Both time and place. What saith the dial now ?

Ar. Close on the hour—Read on.

Pem. (*reading*) "The tide runs strong ;
But night will soon be on us." Soon indeed !

Ar. And this should mean ?

Pem. Aye ! That's the question, George.
This Winchester is daring, subtle, strong ;
But yet—

Ar. There is no "but." I would there were.
Search through the court, there is no other man
Of strength and skill to curb Northumberland.

Pem. I do not like him—He's no friend to us ;
Nor yet to Rome.

Ar. The friends of Rome are those
Who do Rome's work.

Pem. And he will do his own.

Ar. And do it all the better, being his—
'Tis ours no less.

Pem. To foil Northumberland ?
Aye, marry ! Let him cast that devil out
And I'll not ask whose name he conjured with.
There goes the hour—(*clock strikes.*)

Ar.—(*pointing to door which opens.*) And punctual as a
King—

Pem. Hush ! Be not ominous. A King, indeed !
No treason, Arundel.—(*Enter Winchester.*)

Win. Good day, my lords.

Pem. Your lordship's most obedient.

Win. How the spring
Is gaining on us. Why this balmy air
Wooes us like June.

Pem. Your lordship summoned us—?

Win. For graver matters. 'Neath this open sky
We may converse without too anxious dread
Of curious ears.

Pem. A sage precaution, Marquis.
And yet, methinks, I've somewhere heard it said
Northumberland hath eyes, and—

Ar.—(warningly.) Pembroke!

Win. Nay,
His lordship hath the right on't, 'Twere small wit
To seek for cover here. And to say sooth,—
I do not seek it.

Pem. Then your lordship's head
Sits heavy on your shoulders?

Win. Loosely, rather,
And needing all its wit to keep it there.
I will be frank with you. Your lordship's keenness
In truth compels it. I am here, my lords,
The envoy of his grace.

Ar. Northumberland!

Pem. Envoy of Satan.

Win.—(laughingly.) With fullest powers
To treat for souls. And bent to win them too;
Though, for the argument, I'd scarce broach that
Within four walls. A very shallow devil
This Lucifer of yours: Asking but your good leave
To fling himself head foremost to his place;
Waiting no stroke of heaven. But a truce
To this word-tilting. My old wit may yield
Without disgrace to keen young spears like yours.

Pem. Your lordship had some errand?

Win. My Lord Pembroke,
In plain blunt English; can you lay aside
For a brief space,—in this our country's strait—
Your own, most worthy aims, to serve her cause?

Pem. My Lord of Winchester;—before I grant
Your right of question—Was our country's strait
Of my contriving? Was it in my hands

King Henry left the guidance of the State ?
 Was I his counsellor—the chosen guardian
 Of his young heir ? Or was it—

Win. Ah ! my lord,
 The father's friends but rarely please the son.
 Nor doth the cold expedience of years
 Suit youth's hot honesty. The royal Henry—
 Heaven rest his soul—(*lifting his cap.*)

Ar.—(*Lifting his cap also, Pembroke shrugging his shoulders,*)

Win. My dear old master, [Amen !
 Knew well the task he laid upon my faith,
 And watches its fulfilment. Trust me, Sirs ;
 It shall be done. My lord, I will not ask
 An answer to my question. Your frank speech
 Is pledge enough.

Pem. Show me but honor's path,
 I'll not swerve from it.

Win. Then my task is done—
 Listen. Northumberland hath won the King—
 Poor feeble Edward—to proclaim annulled
 The Lady Mary's title. That is done
 Past our undoing. Pray you, hear me out.
 From this, our plotter hath two roads to climb
 The height of his ambition. 'Tis his hand
 Guides Edward's pen, and, in the stolen place
 Of our true mistress, will inscribe the name
 Of the usurper Either of two names
 Will serve his turn, Elizabeth or—Jane.

Ar. Jane !

Pem. Suffolk's daughter ! Now, in the fiend's name,
 Whence comes her title ?

Win. From a double source.
 A royal grandsire,—a more than royal husband ;
 Our new King-maker's son.

Ar. This passes all.

Pem. 'Tis sheer midsummer madness.

Win. And, as such,
Hath my allegiance. Will you shout, with me,
For Queen Jane?

Pem. Will I shout for Belzebub?

Ar. In truth—unless your lordship's pleased to jest—
We scarce can follow you.

Pem. Shout for Jane Grey!
Well; we might shout. Small harm would come of it.

Win. And—pardon me, my lord—is it your wish
That harm should come?

Pem. Why—marry—as to that—
Pray you speak plainly.

Win. Nay—small need to speak,
I see your lordship's ready wit hath caught
The scheme already. This accursed plot
Must have its issue. Round Elizabeth—
Great Henry's daughter—the sworn foe of Rome—
Would rally half the commons. For Jane Grey—
The puppet of Northumberland—not one sword
Would loosen in its sheath. There lies our chance.
The too high aim shall overshoot its mark.
Northumberland himself shall rend the web
Northumberland hath spun; and mad ambition
Like some lush weed, untrained, unchecked, unpruned,
Choke in its own rank growth.

Pem. And what of us?
Are we to prove our loyalty to Mary
By crowning Mistress Grey?

Win. For some ten days,
Perchance a score. Before that time is out
Her reign is done. This treason is a snake
'Twere death to handle now. Be wise and wait.

Then—when the poison-fang breaks on the file
Of cold indifference,—down with the iron heel
Upon its head.

Ar. Aye! But our heads, my lord,
Wil't answer for their safety?

Win. With my own.
Mary herself hath sanctioned our design
And waits—

Pem. Enough! I'm with you Winchester.
There's my hand on it.

Winchester (to Arundel.) And you my lord? (*Arundel gives hand.*)

Pem. But mark me,—
'Tis for ten days—, or at the most, a score.
Three weeks of cringing to Northumberland
Were more than I could stomach.

Win. Have no fear.
His fate is sealed. Farewell— you'll not forget?
“Long live Queen Jane!”—(*exit.*)

Ar. I do not like it.

Pem. Pshaw!
I'll cure thy scruples. Come. The tide has turned.
(*Exit.*)

SCENE 2.—*Bradgate House—Terrace of old grey stone, ornamented yew trees cut into quaint shapes and overlooking fish ponds. Katherine discovered, leaning against the balustrade and listlessly throwing pebbles into the pond.*

Kate. Heigho!—Ah, that was better. Ah! thou wretch!
Thou great, fat, lazy—Ah! Well done! Well done!
Right on his—(*Enter Elizabeth.*)

El. Kate!

K. Look! Bess. That bloated monk—
 I'm sure he was a monk, condemned to fins
 For eating flesh o'Fridays—See him spring
 At just one little—

E.—(*catching her wrist*) Kate! For shame—for shame!
 Why, Lady Jane—

K. Yes, yes. I know it all—
 Her favourite carp. Her most congenial friends.
 Her second-self—so cool, and calm, and grey.
 And quite content with six square yards of pond,
 To pass a life. There! don't be angry, coz.
 But—Well, I'm not a fish, and there's an end.

El. And think'st thou, Kate, this narrow, silent life—
 This grey, monotony—this loveless gloom,
 Is of her choice?

K. No, Bess, a hundred times.
 She is a saint; and I—

El. Hush! Hush! She comes
 And Master Aylmer.

K. What! Old—There! I've done.
 He's good to her.—(*Enter Jane and Alymer.*)

J. Here then my boundary's reached
 I must no farther. Kate! Elizabeth!
 Pray you within. There is a courier
 With letters for my lord, Perchance he brings
 My answer from Erasmus.—(*Exeunt El. & K.*) Master
 Alymer,

You will write soon? Have you the manuscript?
 You'll not forget? That verb, I say, is wrong.
 The fellow-passage in Ezekiel
 Is pointed thus; and the old Hebrew form
 Bears either reading. Search the Septuagint,
 Alas, we have no copy. Ask thy friends.
 I know that we are right. And so—There—there!

I babble on like some untutored child ;
 Who hears the clock chime bedtime and lacks heart
 To face the darkness. Farewell, dear old master,
 Thou'lt not forget thy pupil.

Ayl. Not till death
 Makes memory eternal. Fare thee well.
 And if, ere I return, some larger life
 Should summon thee from hence, do thou remember
 All thine old tutor taught thee.

J. Have no fear,
 Farewell.—(*Exit Ayl.*) A larger life ? A wider sphere
 Of thought and action ? Or a greater scope
 For suffering only ? Have I wrongly read
 The lesson of dumb nature, and is youth
 The winter of our age ? A larger life,
 That means the life of wifeness. To exchange
 A parent's stern, but long accustomed rule
 For the strange yoke of marriage. Shall I find
 More love in him who hath no bond of love
 Save his own promise, than in those whose blood
 Runs in my veins ? Shall I, who dare not lean
 My head upon the bosom where I hung
 A helpless infant, find a pillow for't
 On a man's iron breast ? Alas ! Alas !
 A mother's love were surely easier won
 Than any husband's ; and a mother's love
 Was too hard for my winning.

Guilford—(*without*) Jane !

J. 'Tis he ! (*enter Guil.*)
Guilford ! Is all determined ? (*To him*) Ah ! my lord.
 You startled me.

Guil. What ! Coz. " My lord " to me ?
 And what is this ? In tears !

J. 'Tis nothing—nothing.

Shall we go in? my mother scarce were pleased
That I should linger more.

Guil. Nay then, for once
Your wisdom halts. It was her Grace of Suffolk
Who sent me hither. Am I not welcome, coz?
J. Oh! surely. See (*pointing to pond*) you do not know
my friends.

My dear old carp. They are so—

Guil. (*Taking her hand.*) Jane. *J.* My Lord?

Guil. Thou art not angry, sweet. I am not here
Unwarranted. Thy father speaks through me.
Thou'lt hear his message?

J. If my father speak,
I may not choose, but hear,

Guil. And thou wilt yield
To his behest? Why do you turn away
So coldly from me? Jane—upon my knees
I pray you hear me.

J. Pray you rise, my lord.
Why should you kneel? I am my father's child;
His property—his chattel—to dispose
At his good will.

Guil. Nay, now thou wrong'st me, Jane,
What have I said or done, that thou should'st mock
My love so bitterly?

J. Love! What is love?

Guil. And thou can'st ask! Then let me teach thee, dear,
Ah! Jane; I'll serve thee on my bended knees.
I'll be thy Knight, to conquer wealth and fame,
And lay them at thy feet. I'll climb the steep
Of dizzy power, and pluck ambition's crown
For thy white brow. Set me what wildest task
Fancy can frame; I'll do it for thy love,

Nay, if thou wilt, I'll turn bookworm with thee.
 Quit court and camp, ambition and renown,
 And rob Parnassus of its choicest bays,
 To twine a wreath for thee.

J. And I—and I—

What must I give for all this wealth—

Guil. Thy love.

The right to call this little hand my own,
 The right to clasp this fluttering heart to mine,
 And look into thine eyes—

J. Nay ; let me go.

You trouble me. I pray you set me free.

Guil. Forgive me, I have done. I had no thought
 To anger you.

J. I am not angry, Guilford.

I thank you for your kindness.

Guil. Kindness ! Jane.

Nay, call it love.

J. I scarcely know the word.

Save in my dreams.

Guil. Aye ; but those dreams, sweet-heart.

Were they not golden ? Was not one such dream,
 Worth all thy waking life ? Trust but to me,
 And thy most glowing dream shall pale beside
 Thy waking bliss. I love thee—love thee, Jane
 Dost thou believe it ?

J. (softly) Yes.

Guil. And thou wilt give

Thy love for mine—thoult' be my wife—my queen—
 Say, sweet-heart, will thou not ?

J. (hiding her face on his shoulder) Perhaps—Perhaps.

END OF ACT ONE.

ACT II.

SCENE.—*Garden of Syon House. On one side the House, and on the other side the River. Enter, from the house, Elizabeth and Katherine, and, from the river, Reginald Tylney, meeting.*

Eliz. How fares his Majesty?

Kate What news from Court?

Reg. Ill news, sweet mistress.

El. Is the king dead?

R. Not dead,
But at death's door; and in such piteous plight
That death were mercy.

K. Thou hast seen him then?

R. Aye, marry, have I. And it chills my blood
But to recall the sight.

El. Alas! poor king! (*retires up.*)

R.—(*to Kate.*) Poor king! indeed. They took him from
his bed,

And held him at the window as we passed,
That men might see he lived. 'Twas ghastly, Kate,
So like a corpse that one man cried—"A trick!
That is no living face. The king is dead."
And then the poor white face sank down again,
And women sobbed, and big men cleared their throats,
And scarce found voice to cry, "God save the King!"
'Twas horrible.

- K.* Poor Edward ! yet methinks
Even in death it were a joy to feel
How a whole nation watched beside one's bed.
- R.* Ah Mistress Katherine, may the Saints preserve
Our sweet May Queen, our gentle Lady Jane,
From all such joys.
- K.* The Lady Jane, sir page,
Is of the saints, and doth not pray to them.
But for my prayers—might I so dare to pray,
Spite the grey wisdom of your twenty years—
'Tis no toy coronal should deck that brow,
Worthy of England's crown.
- R.* My twenty years
Bow humbly, cousin, to your fair eighteen ;
But crowns are thorny gear.
- K.* What an old head
For such young shoulders !
- R.* Not so old, sweet coz.,
But it would fain preserve a few years more
Its balance on them.
- K.* So ! the secret's out.
Thou art afeard !
- El.*—(*coming down.*) What ! at crossed swords again !
Can you two never meet but sparks must fly ?
Good Flint and Steel, I pray you bear in mind
These are the sacred precincts of a Court.
- K.* A Twelfth-day Court.
- El.* With pains and penalties
Most stern for such lése-majesté as yours.
Why Kate ! a frown like that were worth at least
A fine of fifty rosebuds. And for you
Sir page, a madrigal of twelve good lines
Would scarce buy grace.
- R.* So be it, and to show

True reconciliation, each shall pay his forfeit
Unto the other.

K. Truly ! a fair exchange,
Good flowers for bad verses !

El. Have a care,
This peace rings hollow. But a truce to jest,
For here comes Gravity to shame us all.
Good morrow, Master Aylmer (*enter Aylmer.*)

Ayl. Give you good day
Fair Mistress Tylney. I have a message here
From your good mistress, and my honored pupil.
Hath she in truth arrived ?

R. Aye, reverend Sir,
And in such haste that half our learned gear
Lies yet in Chelsea yonder. Through the storm
Of yester eve, a courier from Greenwich,
Drenched to the skin and with a wondrous tale
Of blood-red snow and fiery-flaming sky,
Rode hot-foot with the summons, and ere morn
Bookless, and well nigh gownless, our fair saint
Was throned in Syon.

Ayl. Was the haste so great
Young sir, that reverence too was left behind ?
Boy ! 'tis this light and unrespective mood—
This shallow trifling with all holy things—
This jeering, hollow, reckless, godless mocking,
That is the mortal canker of our time.
What ! When the very air is thick with woe—
When such calamity as never yet
Hath England known, hangs by one stranded thread
Over our Sion—when 'een dumb nature speaks
In awful portents—Can thy saucy tongue
Find no more fitting theme to jest withal ?

R. Your pardon, sir. If a light word of mine

Have indeed merited this sharp rebuke
 'Twas no light thought of England or her griefs
 That prompted it. If there be storm without,
 In the charmed circle of our fairy court
 It hath no echo. All is sunshine here,
 Or was till yesterday.

K. Aye truly, sirs,
 Had we but known the learned Master Aylmer
 Was scared by portents—

El. Prithee, Kate, forbear.

Ayl. There is one portent, girl, might scare us all
 That, in a noble and a godly house,
 The very heart and hope of our great cause,
 Age should have lost its worship, and pert youth
 Mock at grey hairs. If the foul taint have gnawed
 So deep as this into our very vitals,
 Poor England ! thou hast bitter days to come.
 Pray you, no more, and you, good Mistress Tylney,
 Convey my duty to the Lady Dudley,
 And say I wait her pleasure.

El. Pray you be seated.

I will return,—but, see my mistress comes. (*enter Jane*)

R. — (*aside*) And never half so welcome. (*to Jane*).
 Gracious Queen,

The worthy Master Aylmer prays your Majesty
 For audience.

Ayl.—(*aside.*) Majesty !

Jane Ah ! good Master Aylmer

This is true friendship. Why 'tis like old times.

Ayl. Are then the times so changed ?

Jane Only as day

Is changed from night. Do you remember, sir,
 In those old days a guest at Bradgate once,
 A strange salt-smelling man ?

- Ayl.* A Portuguese,
A wild adventurer from the Spanish Main.
- Jane* A sixteenth-century Herodotus
Full of sea wonders. Dost remember how
In the grey twilight of that winter's eve,
This ocean monster told such fairy tales
As never poet dreamed?
- Ayl.* Of fish that fly,
And burning water, and the dawnless burst
Of night to day.
- Jane* As, while Aurora lagged,
The impatient god had passed her on the way.
- Ayl.* I do remember.
- Jane* How I wondered then!
And strove to picture it; and never dreamed
I listened to the tale of my own life.
- Ayl.* How mean you?
- Jane* Why, what else? How still it was,
That night of childhood! Every floweret closed,
Thicket and copse all voiceless; and the crags
Of rugged Duty piled so stern and high,—
With such black shadows and sharp icy peaks—
That Duty's self turned chill and feared to climb.
- Ayl.* And was that all? In that calm silent night
Had'st thou no commune with the voiceless souls
Of the undying dead?
- Jane*—(*enthusiastically*). And loved them too—
Passionless, far-off stars!—and could have lived
Content with their mild radiance. Nay, had the light
Dawned greyly, could have wept to see them fade,
And longed for night again. Ah! 'Twas not so,
I stood alone with night—and night was gone,
One quivering flush—one mighty Memnon-throb
Of music everywhere—and with a bound

- My Phœbus swept, full-rayed, into the sky.
Ayl. And, in this tropic radiance, the poor stars
 Twinkle no longer ?
- Jane* Why, thou jealous tutor !
 “ Are there such passions in celestial minds ? ”
 Elizabeth ! What book was that we nursed
 Through last night’s hurried march ?
- El.* So please your grace,
 Your favourite Phædon.
- Jane* Well ! Art satisfied,
 Stern champion of the stars ? Why, how thou frown’st,
 Does sunshine pain thine eyes ?
- Ayl.* Nay, ’tis mine ears
 That tingle now,
- Jane* At a light laughing word [once,
 From poor, grave Jane ? Why, sure thou lov’dst her
 And oft would strive—may heaven love thee for’t—
 To lighten her dark hours.
- Ayl.* And do so still.
 ’Tis love, not lack of love, that bids me frown.
- Jane* Nay, now the mystery thickens. What hath love
 To do with frowns ?
- Ayl.* More sometimes than with smiles.
 Lady, how comes it—But I crave your pardon
 My day is past.
- Jane* Nay, thou art cruel now.
 Is it because thy love is hard and stern
 That mine must needs be fickle. Thou’rt no more
 The tutor of the child ; must then the woman
 Forfeit her friend ?
- Ayl.* Then, as a friend, I’ll ask
 Who is it claims my friendship ?
- Jane* Who ! why, I,
 Jane Dudley.

Ayl.

Nay, I cry you mercy then.

Methought—but these old ears grow strangely dull—
 I heard a loftier title, such as “Grace,”
 Or “Majesty.”

Jane

And was it really this

Wrinkled thy brow? Did'st think our tropic sun
 Had shone so hotly on this poor weak brain
 That it had crazed it? Why, 'twas but a jest;
 A May-day frolic of these madcap girls.
 Ho! Kate! Elizabeth! and you, sir page—
 We are arraigned usurper. Bear you witness
 What and from whence our throne.

El.—(Coming down with wreath of red and white roses.)

So please your Grace

To don the crown? *(Giving wreath to Jane.)*

Reg.—(Coming down with Kate.) The whiles that I proclaim
 Long live the Queen—of Hearts!

Kate—(aside to Reginald.) And eke the knave?*Jane—(to Aylmer.)* Well! Frowning still?*Ayl.*

Child—children all—ye sport

On the volcano's brink. Such jests too oft
 Have turned to earnest, and from thence—to death.
 Ye play with fire.

Jane

Nay, trust me, good old friend,

Thy zeal outruns thy wisdom in that fear.
 Our little fairy court this side the river;
 Its mossy throne; its rosebud diadem;
 Its laughing girls for courtiers, and its sway
 O'er hearts and flowers, knows no more rivalry
 With that dull drear magnificence of gloom
 At Greenwich yonder, than the lark's free sky
 Hath with the gilded cage. I'd not exchange
 This garden here for all the glittering prisons
 Poor Alexander sighed for.

- Ayl.* Why, well said !
Heaven keep you in that mind !
- Jane* I'd rather live
Walled up for ever in — No, no, not that,
Not in a cloister (*going to sundial*). How the shadow
- Ayl. (to El.)* Is my lord absent ? [crawls !
- El.* Since the early morn.
A summons from the court.
- Jane—(looking off towards river)* Elizabeth,
Look, look, my girl. What cognizance is that,
There, by yon willows ? Yes—it is—it is
Our bear and lion.
- El.* Nay, your eyes beat mine,
I see no cognizance.
- Jane* Oh, poor blind Bess !
That hath but eyes to see with. (*Drops wreath and*
[*crosses quickly to river side.*])
- Ayl. (aside)* Now may kind heaven
Deal tenderly with that too tender heart !
Oh, cursed ambition ! must thy Moloch altar
Smoke with no meaner sacrifice than this ?
[*Enter, from boat, Lord GUILFORD DUDLEY, attended.*
JANE meets him, holding out both hands.]
- Jane* Art come at last ?
- Guil.* Hail to earth's fairest queen.
Sweet ! I have news, great news.
- J.* Of Edward ?
- Guil.* Hush !
We must be private. Reverend Master Aylmer,
We crave your kind indulgence, but affairs
Of moment press upon us.
- Ayl.* Good, my lord,
I am your servant. (*Going*)
- Kate (aside to Reginald)* So ! The style, royal ?

Ayl. (to Jane)

Lady,

Heaven guide and guard you.

(Exit. The others retire up.)

J.

Guilford—

Guil.—(picking up wreath)

Why, sweet Queen,

Hast thou uncrowned thyself?

J.

Was it not time,

When my own sovereign came?

Guil.

Nay—But no matter.

We'll fit thee with a fairer.

J.

Then no hands

But thine must weave it.

Guil.

'Twas woven at thy birth

Of these same roses. See the rival hues

Of York and Lancaster. 'Tis England's crown,

Waits England's mistress.

J.

Nay, thou mock'st me now.

Give me my roses back. But tell me, Guilford.

Thou hast some news of Edward? Doth he mend?

Guil. The King—is dead.

J.

Oh poor, poor Edward! Dead?

Guil. Sweet, hold thy tears. There is grave work at hand.

J. And bitter work for England.

Guil.

Nay, not so.

The King is dead and we must mourn for him.

But England shall not suffer. In his place

He hath himself appointed a successor,

A worthy one—And the great lords, whose hands

Endorsed the deed, are now upon their way

To bear the tidings. But for my swifter galley,

They had been here before me.

J. (startled)—

Here! Why here?

Guil. Canst thou not guess? Ah! Be my knee the first

To greet our new-made Queen. *(goes to kneel)*

J. (*stopping him*) No, Guilford, no.
Thou art not mad? I thought thou mock'dst, but now.
Say 'twas a jest.

Guil. No; by St. George, 'twas not.
The dower thou bring'st thy faithful Guilford, Jane
Is England's crown.

J. And canst thou triumph thus
Over our ruin ? Oh, Guilford, husband, love !
What need have we for crowns ? Are we not happy ?
Hath Earth one further blessing to bestow ?
Could Heaven itself—save for the Presence there—
Glow with more glory than those love-lit shades
Where we walked hand in hand but yesterday ?
Oh, darling, think again. Be pitiful,
If not to thine own love, to mine—to mine.

Guil. Nay sweet-heart, nay. This is unworthy thee.
Why should our love—(*Trumpet from river*).

But hark ! My father comes.

Now bear thee like a queen. Ladies ! We pray you
Attend your mistress.

J. (*aside*) Now am I lost indeed,
Nor prayers nor tears will move that iron heart,
Yet oh ! 'tis monstrous. I to seize the crown !
Why it mocks argument. Oh God of Justice,
If love be all too weak to plead my cause
Sharpen my wit to conquer, Lord, in thine.

Enter from river the DUKE and DUCHESS OF NORTHUMBERLAND, DUKE and DUCHESS OF SUFFOLK, MARQUIS OF WINCHESTER, EARLS OF PEMBROKE and ARUNDEL, &c., &c., JANE advances to meet them, and is about to kneel to the DUKE OF SUFFOLK.)

Jane **My father !**

Suf. (*staying her*). Hold! my child. From this proud day
Thou hast no knee for man. Thou know'st our errand?

(*To Win.*) My lord of Winchester, the Lady Jane
Attends your message.

Win. In the name of England!
By order of the Council, and command
Of our late sovereign Master, good king Edward!

North. Heaven rest his soul.

Win. Amen. Sound trumpets (*Flourish*) Madam, (*To Jane*)
May it so please you to receive the message
That we are charged withal?

J. Speak on, my lord.
I cannot choose but listen, thus conjured;
Nor you, my lord, thus charged, be charged with ought
That may not fit the ears of one, like me,
A woman and a subject.

Win. By your leave,
'Tis of that, madam, that my message speaks.
Our late good master, with the grave advice
Of all his Council, hath bequeathed the crown,
Setting aside all intermediate heirs,
To you and yours for ever. We are here,
Executors of that most sovereign will,
To bid you to the throne.

Suf. Speak, Jane.

J. (To Win.) My lord,
I pray you think me not too lightly moved
By your great goodness, nor too fond to match
My weakness with your wisdom. (*To Suf.*) I would fain
Be now, as ever, guided by your will.
But for the crown—I pray you pardon me—
I dare not take it.

Nor. Dare not!

Suff. Why, how so?

Duch. Suff. 'Tis thine by right and duty

J. Nay, good mother.

My cousins, Mary and Elizabeth
Are both of elder blood.

Nor. The taint of birth
Has bastardized their claim.

J. That taint was purged,
By solemn ordinance of Parliament.

Duch. Suf. 'Tis re-affirmed

J. Oh! mother. Do not thou
Strike, thro' a mother's honor, at her child.
Were the right mine I'd gladly yield it up
To shield my cousin's name. Thou canst not ask me
To gild my wrong by smirching it anew
Suf. This is too much. Was this thy training, girl,
To teach thy parents how to rule their tongues?
Thou dost forget thy duty.

J. Only then
When thou dost bid me lay my duty by.
I would be still thy daughter, not thy Queen.
Is that undutiful?

Win. Lady, our time is brief.
Thou pleadest well, but with an eloquence,
Fitter to win than to avert a crown.
And thy sweet modesty gives further warrant,
Were further warrant needed, that our choice
Hath fallen wisely. Prithee, bethink you now
That even modesty may stretch too far.
The ways of Heaven are inscrutable,
And slightest means work oft to gravest ends.
So is it now with thee. Thou art a child,
And canst not read the pressure of the times,
Be ruled by those who can. The Faith thou lovest
All unestablished by the brief, bright reign
Of sainted Edward, stands in jeopardy,

Both grave and imminent. Will you not lend
Your aid to her great cause.

J. Aye—joyfully.

Such aid as one poor martyr's blood may give.
I have no right to more.

Win. The King—

North. Tush ! tush !

The King is dead. Madam we have no space
For idle scruples now. The Lady Mary—
Her zeal inflamed to fever by restraint—
Waits but the hour which even now hath struck
To fling herself, and with herself, all England,
Under the feet of Rome. As Heaven's above us,—
King, or no King—cost what the struggle may
This shall not be. Madam we come to you
Not in Ambition's, but in Duty's name ;
Not with a promise but a stern demand,
See that you slight it not.

J. My lord, my lord—

Show me but that—But—Duty—no, no, no.
'Tis none of mine.

Win. Lady, the blood of Kings

Runs rich for sacrifice, that meaner veins
May throb unprick'd. Think of thyself no more,
Think but that England calls Plantagenet
To stand between her and a storm of woes.
Think that thy Church calls on her favorite child ;
And, if the crown she offers be of thorns,
Take it in Heaven's name.

Jane Aye ! that were noble.

That were a bribe might tempt one to a throne.
Oh, good my lords, think not a six weeks' bride
Clings all too selfishly to this sweet life

Of love and joy and calm. I am too happy,
 Yet I would leave it all without a sigh
 Could I but feel the call.

Suf. What would'st thou more?

North. This is mere folly.

Win. Pray you one moment's patience.

Lady, thy country and thy church alike
 Demand this sacrifice. What other voice
 Can speak more strongly?

Jane True. Oh England! England!

Oh! bright, pure faith!

Duch. Suf. She yields!

North. Your highness!—

Jane Stay!

Not yet my lord. There is one question still.
 Grant that the strong necessity of state
 Outweighs the elder claim. Yet even so.
 What right have I? I am not next in blood.
 Go to Elizabeth, my lord. In her
 Both church and state will find a stay as true,
 And stronger far than I.

North. Beseech you, madam,
 Think that these points, all weighty as they are,
 Have not been altogether passed unseen
 By us of the king's council (*to Win.*); there, speak on,
 My patience wanes.

Win. Madam, the sister claims

Of Mary and Elizabeth are one.
 The plea of bastardy taints both alike
 And passes without challenge. To unfurl
 The banner of the faith were to provoke
 The very ills we dread; and civil war
 Would flood all England with a sea of blood.
 Be that your title.

- eth.* And a holy one,
Sanctioning all.
- ne* No. That is Rome's worst lie.
The cause of God can never call for crime,
Look you, my lords, betwixt the crown and me
Stand but two lives. What are two lives to God?
Were my poor aid so needful to His plans
It were no sin in Him to call them home,
I will not weight my soul.
- forth.* Thy soul is free,
If king and council cannot hold it harmless
Here's spiritual warrant.
- Win.* On this scroll,
Which makes thee queen, the sainted name of Cranmer
Stands in the foremost place. Lay upon him
The burthen of your choice.
- June* My lord, my lord!
Thou dost forget what spirit thou art of.
Hath this religion thou would'st have me champion
No answer of its own to such a plea?
Could we but lay our burdens on a priest
Why Rome hath priests enow to bear them all,
Why should we leave her then. Alas! my lord,
Freedom of conscience is our battle-cry,
And Freedom bears no burdens but her own.
Urge me no more. If this our cause be God's
'Tis safest in his hands.
- Suf.* Daughter
- North.* Enough!
I cry you mercy, good my lord of Suffolk,
But if this learned damsel be so keen
To flout all argument, why be it so.
The crown of England will not long go begging,
And, if its purchase cost a war or two,

Why, what is that to us. My Lady Jane,
I humbly take my leave.

n. (*aside to Lord Guilford*) This must not be,
Try thou thy witcheries.

il. Hold! father, hold!
Jane! by our new born love, our new found bliss!
By every tie that knits our souls in one—
Be not thus obdurate—'tis thy husband pleads—
Jane! for my sake—

me Oh Guildford!—Guildford!—

uil. Sweetheart!

My love, my life! (*dropping on one knee*)—my Queen!

Fin. GOD save Queen Jane!

END OF ACT TWO.

ACT III.

SCENE 1. — JANE'S apartment in the Tower. Doors opening into the Queen's bedchamber and (c) to the ante-chamber or corridor. Katherine discovered practising court curtsies, &c., before a mirror (R.C.)

Kate First maid of Honour to Her Majesty !
Yes, That sounds better. " Mistress Katherine,
" The Queen commands your presence " " So please
[your Grace,
" The royal barge awaits your Highness' pleasure "
" Bid our Lord Chancellor attend " " My lord,
" I have the Queen's commands " Oh ! Kate, Kate,
[Kate !
" Six months ago you little thought to stitch
A sampler of this pattern. Let us see,
Yes that is it " My gracious Liege, goodnight,
And pleasant dreams attend your Majesty."
And so—(stepping carefully backwards towards (L)
manœuvring her skirts. Enter ELIZABETH from door (L)
behind her)

Eliz. And so ?

K. (turning hastily)— Your Grace ?

El. Nay Kate, the grace

Was all thine own.

K. Fie ! What a rustic gibe !

Thou'lt have to mend that country wit of thine
To shine at court.

El. Would my poor country wit
Had country air to shine in.

K. (mockingly) With long Joan,
The dairy-wench, to clank her buckets down
And cry "Haw! haw!—Well zed!"

El. Poor Joan!

K. For shame!

A pretty maid of honour! Housed in state
In London's royal Tower, and so please ye!
Sighing for pigs and poultry!

El. Ah! this Tower!

I do not like it, Kate. These bolts and bars,
These sentries' pikes, levelled at every turn,
These signs and countersigns, and gates like Hell's
That open only inwards, seem to me
Less court than prison.

K. And why so? Because
These weary lords, half-hearted, like thyself,
Must need be cooped, like pullets,

El. And the Commons?
What of them, Kate?

K. The Commons! Say the mob
That shouts for any show.

El. I did not hear it
When sweet Queen Jane rode through its gaping ranks,
Why was it silent then?

K. Pshaw! What care I?
Come but my lord of Suffolk quickly back
With Mary in his train, and you shall see
How lords and commons both will flock to us.

El. Heaven send it so.

K. Amen! with all my heart.

El. With all thy heart indeed. Hast heard the news?

K. What news? From—

- El.* Well ?
- K.* From—Norfolk ?
- El.* No, not Norfolk.
- K.* From Cambridge then ?
- El.* A courier for my lord.
And in his bag—Why how thou blushest, Kate !
'Twas but a groom.
- K.* Pshaw ! Give it me.
- El.* The bag ?
- His lordship hath it.
- K.* Nay thou teasing wench.
The letter—from thy saucy brother yonder.
- El.* Why this is witchcraft ! Rank black art ! But there,
I'll not torment thee, Kate. (*gives letter*)
- K.* Why !—What is this ?
The silk already cut !—" To Mistress Tylney "
- This is not—
- El.* Yes ! from saucy Reginald.
Thou'rt welcome to it.
- K.* (*reared*) Nay, I thank you kindly,
I have no lack of letters. (*aside*) Kate ! thou fool !
Oh ! I could pinch myself !
- El.* What ! Angry, coz ?
- K.* Angry ! Not I. Why should I—
- El.* Hush ! The Queen !
- (*Enter Jane from door.* (L))
- Jane* Girls ! what is this ? a courier from the camp,
And I, the queen, to hear no word of it ?
Kate ! know you aught of this ?
- Kate* Not I, my liege.
I have no correspondents in the camp.
- Jane* And you, Elizabeth ?
- El.* Your majesty,
There came a messenger to-day from Cambridge ;

A mere groom only, on some trifling errand
Touching a harness, or some such-like gear,
And straight rode back again.

Jane And was this all?
How petulant one grows upon the rack.
No letters?

El. None, my liege—of public import.

Kate (*sharply*) Your grace's loyal subjects have their tongues
More ready than their pens.

El. (*warmly*) My liege—

Jane How now?
Sharp words—hot cheeks! There is some mystery here,
Must I command? Oh! shall this thorny crown
Hedge me from all my friends?

El. Nay, dear my liege!

There is no mystery. The groom I spoke of
Brought me a hasty line from Reginald.
There is no more than that.

Jane Thou lucky Bess!
And what saith Reginald? (*Jane holds out her hand for
the letter, El. hesitates*)—Nay, if 'tis private
We do not seek to see it.

El. Oh! not that.
Take it my liege. There is no truer heart
Than Reginald's—

Jane In all wide England, Bess.
(*Reads*) “These by my lord's groom, Dick Ranger,
“ who is away to London for certain suits of harness.
“ No more, as they tell us; though an' he should
“ bring in them a few stout men-at-arms, in sooth
“ he would be none the less welcome. For we have
“ in us no more of the snow-ball than just its cold-
“ ness, Bess, and gather no weight by rolling.
“ Would we were back again, the Lady Mary in

"safe custody, and our sweet mistress beyond the
 "damage of chill hearts and traitorous hands.
 "Heaven send us a stout fight soon to warm our
 "thin blood, though I fear me there be few here
 "that have much stomach for it. Thy brother,
 "Reginald."

A loving, loyal letter—Thanks, my girl,
 For thy kind thought to hide it. Traitorous hands
 Chill hearts—thin blood—no stomach for the fight —
 Why, who hath less than I? Whose blood more chill
 At thought of that must flow to keep me here
 Chained to this bitter throne. Well, well! 'tis done.
 So! a postscriptum. Was it this, my Kate,
 Flushed those hot cheeks?

Kate Indeed, your highness, no.

I saw but the outside.

Jane The outside? Ha!

Was't misdirected then? Elizabeth

Seek our new secretary, good Master Aylmer—(*exit El.*)

Kate, I must lecture thee.

Kate (*bridling*) Your Majesty,

I trust—

Jane And I trust too, thou hasty rebel,

With largest confidence. Wilt thou make good

That trust of mine?

Kate Aye, will I. With my life.

What must I do?

Jane In sooth an irksome task.

Yet with some after sweetness. Can't thou guess

Who 'tis would rob me of that warm young life

Thou biddest me dispose of. There, thy cheek

Speaks loud enough. Kate! I'd so large a trust

In thy devotion—not to him, to me—

I pledged the Royal word. Wilt thou redeem it?

Kate Your highness—(*hesitating*)

Jane Well? Come, we'll be serious now,
I know thou lov'st him. Kate! one honest heart
Is worth the wide world's empire ten times told.
What have we girls to do with state or power?
Our kingdom is our home. Our priceless crown
The reverent love of husband and of child.
Our throne, the hearts of those who govern us.
Dost think a Cæsar's empire would contain
A woman's heart when these were forfeited?
Heaven bless thee, Kate. Be happy—and be wise.

(*Enter Aylmer.*)

Ayl. Your majesty sent for me?

Jane Yes, old friend.
There are some papers—not in Hebrew now,
Nor even Greek; plain crabbed English only—
Await your office.

Ayl. With your Grace's pardon
My lord of Winchester craves audience.

Jane I cannot see him. I am weary, sick.
What wants he with me?

Ayl. 'Twas his grace's pleasure
My lord should wait upon your majesty
Touching the crown.

Jane (*not understanding*) His Grace?

Ayl. Of Dudley, madam,
Your highness' noble husband.

J. Aye, his Grace (*aside*)

Poor Guildford!—And poor Jane!—The crown—the
[crown!]

Was that indeed the glittering bait that lured him;
I but the barbed hook that it hung upon?
Oh! shame—No, shame on me for such a thought!
Away with it. (*aloud*) Inform my lord, old friend,

We will receive him straightway. Come my girls.

(*Exit Ayl.*)

Ah Kate; the wife is happier than the Queen.

(*Exeunt Omnes. Scene closes.*)

SCENE II.—*Audience Chamber in the Tower. Enter AYLMEY and WINCHESTER, followed by Page carrying the crown on a velvet cushion.*

Ayl. This is the place, my lord.

Win. I thank you sir. (*Exit Ayl.*)

I will attend her Majesty (*Enter Pembroke c*) How
[now?

Ha! my lord Pembroke. You do seem disturbed.
Is aught amiss?

Pem. Aye, very much amiss.

We've been too clever, Winchester. The trap
Hath closed its jaws on us.

Win. How mean you, closed?

Pem. This cursed Tower, man. Northumberland
Hath seized the gates and none can pass without
Save on his warrant. We are trapped, I say,
Like wild boars in a pit. Knew you of this?

Win. Some three hours since.

Pem. And stand with folded arms,
In meek attendance on this puppet Queen,
While black Northumberland prepares the axe
Under our very beards?

Win. Fear nothing, Pembroke,
Our beards shall wag long after that same axe
Hath played the barber for Northumberland.
See you yon crown?

Pem.

Queen Mary's.

Win.

And brought hither

Upon Queen Mary's business. Hark i' thine ear.
This farce is five days old. In five days more
The curtain falls. By noon Northumberland
Rides hence for Norfolk.

Pem.

Nay, 'tis my lady's father,

His grace of Suffolk, hath that mission.

Win.

Hath—

But not for long. Already mistress Jane
Begins to chafe and fret against the yoke
Of her grim servant. Ere my errand's done
It shall so gull that she should rather live
A toad beneath a harrow, than a Queen
With him for gaoler.

Pem.

And the remedy?

Win.

A change of parts. No more. My lady's father
To guard my lady—and ourselves—in London.
The post of honour—of high honour, mark you—
The sole command of all our powers in Norfolk,
To the great Duke.

Pem.

It is a goodly scheme.

But—he'll not go.

Win.

He will obey the Queen.

Or, failing in obedience, will meet
The rebel's guerdon.

Pem.

At whose hand?

Win.

At mine,

And yours, and all of us. The bond is loosed—
The house against the house—but hush!—She comes
Seek out young Dudley—Send him hither straight;
Be wary, but be prompt. Away! (*Exit PEMBROKE.*)

Usher (*throwing open the door L.*)

The Queen!

(*Enter JANE attended by KATE and ELIZABETH.*)

J. Welcome my lord. Not for your errand's sake
 But for your own, and his who sent you here.
 Where is this weary crown? Look you my girls,
 How light it seems, (*Puts on the crown.*)

K. And oh! how brilliant, madam,
 Now you are Queen.

J. Aye; like thy namesake, Katherine,
 Or poor Anne Boleyn. Take it back, my lord.
 My neck aches under it.

Win. So please your Grace,
 It might be lightened by an ounce or two.

J. Poor Winchester! Would'st take an ounce or two
 From all the weight of England?

Win. Nay, your highness,
 That task is for more honoured hands than mine.

Jane (*sadly*) For none, my lord.

Win. Yet burthens shared are lightened
 By more than half. Your grace's royal purpose
 Once put in act, this awful weight of rule
 Will fall on shoulders broad enough.

Jane My purpose?
 What purpose? Good my lord, you speak in riddles.
 What purpose, pray you?

Win. If too anxious zeal
 Have outrun reverence, beseech your grace
 Pardon the error of a head grown grey
 In a king's confidence. I 'een had ventured
 A word of humble counsel, but that I saw
 Your grace's quick wit had forestalled the need,
 And grasped the policy my duller brain
 Had scarce yet dared to hint.

Jane What policy?
 Pray you speak plainly.

Win. To forbear the strife

Unequal at the best ; and in the loss
 Of your most noble father, of such odds
 The haughtiest need not shame to shrink from it.

Jane And what, I pray you, is this grievous strife
 In which I yield so wisely ? I had thought—
 Saving your lordship's wisdom—that the presence
 In Norfolk yonder of my noble father
 Were rather gain than loss.

Win. Your grace is pleased
 To read my counsel backwards. When I spoke
 Of the lord Suffolk's loss, 'twas to the struggle
 In London, not in Norfolk.

Jane And for what ?

Win. For power madam.

Jane Between whom ?

Win. Between
 My lord duke of Northumberland and—(*pauses*)

Jane The Queen ?

And I have won your lordship's kind approval
 By prudent yielding ? Might I crave to know
 The manner of it ?

Win. Madam, the wise resolve
 To share the crown.

Jane To share ?—(*pauses*)

Win. I have received
 Your grace's orders—or, to speak more closely,
 His grace of Dudley's—that a second crown
 Should be prepared.

Jane For whom ?—A second crown !

You have misunderstood your charge, my lord.
 His grace of Dudley's a too loyal subject,
 Too true an Englishman, too kind a husband,
 To do such wrong as this to wife or queen.
 There is some error.

Usher (*announcing*) His grace, lord Guilford Dudley.

Jane (*aside*) Guilford! now heaven help me! must I shame
My husband publicly? (*aloud*) Lord Winchester
We thank you for your pains. Some other time
We will speak with you further (*enter Guil.*) Ha! my
Thou hast played truant. [good lord

Guil. Fairest queen, the state
Is a hard mistress. My lord Winchester
We pray you leave us not.

Jane Nay, let him go.
These three days past we have not had one hour
Of heart to heart. I've a request—(*to Win.*) my lord,
We would be private.

Guil. Hold! One moment sweet,—
Pray you, my lord, bring back the crown awhile.

J. Lord Guilford.

Guil. Madam?

J. I have a letter here,
Of grave import to us and to the State,
Pray you advise. (*To Eliz.*) The letter, quick, my girl.
(*gives letter to Ld. Guilford.*)

Guil. (*reading*) So! Traitors! cowards. We'll take order
[with them.

Who is this Reginald?

J. A faithful servant
Soon to be wedded to our Katherine here.
And, for that both are special friends of mine,
I'd pray some special grace, dear lord, of you.

Guil. With all my heart.

Win. (*to Kate*) Content you, pretty mistress.
The king will see to it.

J. Alas! my lord

The king is dead.

Guil. Aye, but his will—

J. (aside to Guil.)

Contains

No word of king. Guilford ! For Heaven's sake—
(*aloud*) Shall we go in, my lord ?

Win. (aside).—

Now, as I live,

She masters him. This must not be. (*aloud*) Your

[Grace.

Touching the crown—

J.

My lord of Winchester,

Your audience is ended.

Win. (aside).—

By my faith

She queens it royally. (*enter Nor.*) Ha ! Northumber-
[land !

The hunt is up again.

Nor.

Your Majesty

The hour draws near—But hold ! I interrupt

More pleasant business. Hath your Grace selected

The royal aureole to deck the brow

Of my too honoured Guilford ?

J.

Good, my lord —(*hesitating*).

*Win (aside)—*Now, will she brave him too ?

J.

I have no heart

For jesting now—Pray you, my lord, forbear,

Some other time—

Nor.

Nay, good my liege, not so.

No time like this.

J.

My lord, it cannot be.

Nor. Your Highness is in error. (*To Win.*) My lord Marquis.

(*Takes crown from Win., and hands it to Guil.*)

Thanks, my good lord. Guilford—

J. (to Guil. who is about to put on the crown). Lord Guilford

[Dudley

Set down the crown.

Guil. (returning crown to Winchester). Your Majesty !

J.

Ah ! sirs,

Why will you force this bitter task upon me?
 Was it my choice to leave the blest estate
 Of wifely duty? Did I seek to rule,
 Or weary of obeying. Ah! not so,
 'Twas in obedience I took this sceptre
 And I must sway it in obedience still.

Nor. Obedience! To whom?

J. To him, my lord,
 Of whom I hold it.

Nor. Truly your Grace is pleased
 To jest with me. I am your humble subject
 To yield, not claim obedience.

J. Nay, my lord,
 I wronged you not so deeply. When I speak
 Of my obedience; 'tis to Him alone,
 Whom Prince and people must alike obey.
 The crown of England is no tyrant's warrant,
 To rule at his own will for his own ends.
 It is a trust—an awful, sacred charge—
 To govern for the nation, and for God.

Nor. A charge too heavy for a woman's shoulders.

J. Heaven knows it is. Oh! had I but the choice
 To lay it down.

Guil. I am thy husband, Jane,
 And have full right to share thy dignity.

Nor. Jane,—Pshaw, Your Majesty, hath learned too well
 A daughter's duty, not to know the place
 God's Word assigns the wife.

J. God's Word, my lord,
 Makes daughter yield to wife, but wife to monarch.

Guil. So then, the happy husband of a Queen
 Hath a brave part. How say you, Winchester?
 A goodly part.

J. (to Winchester)—Nay, good my lord, say on.

Am I indeed neglectful of the duty
I once so loved to pay ?

Win. 'Tis not for me [tion
To judge your Highness. But for his Grace's ques-
The Consort of a Queen hath noble ends
To serve withal.

Guil. Noble ! good sooth !

Win. Aye, noble.

Unmarked himself to stay the feeble hand
And guide the faltering step. To bear the burden
Unheeding the reward. His only thought
How best to serve his Sovereign. His one aim
To comfort, counsel, shelter, strengthen, aid—
The woman God hath given to his arms.
A life of royal self-forgetfulness.
A King's unceasing care ; with no alloy
Of Kingly pride. A husband's holiest charge ;
With love, not law, for sole authority.

Jane (*holding out her hand to WINCHESTER, who kisses it.*)

Thanks, my good lord. (*To GUILDFORD.*) Art thou
[contented, love ?

Guil. To live unhonoured, and to die unknown.

J. No, Guildford, no. A thousand times more honoured,
More loved, more worshipped by the poor pent heart
That may not speak its homage ; and, when Death
Tears off the veil, shining ten thousand times
More brightly for the foil of the dim past.
Guildford !—My own dear husband !—

Guil. Words ! Jane, words.

Nor. If they mean ought they can be quickly proved.

J. I cannot, and I dare not.

Nor. (*in a low tone*) — Say you will not.

But have a care. I placed you on the throne,
The hand which made can unmake.

- J.* My lord duke
Is this a threat ?
- Nor.* Power does not threaten, madam.
It is the hand that hath not strength to strike
Which shakes in empty menace.
- J.* Hold, my lord,
Weak woman as I am, I am your Queen,
Hush ! on your life.
- Win.* (*aside*)— Why, spoken like a Queen.
- J.* My lords, I pray you take a little space
For calm reflection, 'Twas your will, not mine,
That made me Queen. Uncrown me if you will,
But never think to turn me from the path
Of conscious right, by fears of losing that
Which kills me in the keeping, While I am Queen
I will be Queen. And when my King takes back
The crown I hold of Him, He shall not find
One jewel lost or dimmed Lord Winchester ;
I too have need of counsel. Pray you follow.
(*Exit, attended by Win., Kate, Eliz., &c.*)
- Nor.* Now by S. George ! this passes all belief.
- Guil.* Will you bear this ? Father !—What means this
Must I forego my claim ? [silence ?]
- Nor.* Tut, foolish boy !
Wouldst grasp a crown and hast not wit to keep
Thy head upon thy shoulders ? Winchester
Is in the pay of Mary, and this coil
Is of his making. But content thee, son.
The bird may flutter, but the net is heavy,
'Twill soon be tame enough. Be patient, cool,
Give thy superb young mistress time to tire
Of her new plaything. And do thou thyself
So rule thy conduct, that when she shall beg—
As beg she shall—thy aid to bear her yoke,

The happy court may look to find in thee
 A welcome curb upon—Northumberland. (*Trumpet*)
 Hark! We are called. Now for the lover's smile
 The subjects humblest courtesy.

Guil. Well, so be it.

I yield me to your wisdom.

Nor. Tush! boy, tush!

The day is past for carving crowns with swords.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.—*Court yard of the Tower. Great gates at back (c.) leading from interior. Enter through the gates a troop of NORTHUMBERLAND's retainers, who range themselves on one side of the stage, followed by a much larger body, bearing various cognizances, who range themselves on the opposite side. Drums, trumpets, &c. Then enter ARUNDEL and PEMBROKE.*

Pem. There's thunder in the air.

Ar. (*glancing at the troops*) The clouds full charged,
 Waiting but Jove's command. Hast played the Vulcan
 To purpose, Pembroke?

Pem. With as keen a zeal
 As—as—i'faith her learned majesty
 May find the simile.

Ar. Alas! alas!
 Thou art but a poor courtier. Read thine Ovid
 And metamorphosize thyself. But hold!
 Northumberland! with brows of Erebus.

(*Enter NORTHUMBERLAND.*)

Good day, my lord.

North. (*abruptly*) Where is the Duke of Suffolk?

Ar. Some half-hour since, my lord of Winchester
Came from her majesty to call the duke
To private council.

North. Winchester?—so—so—
'Twere well to be prepared. (*To captain of his own
troops*) Are your arms charged?

Capt. They are, my lord.

North. Be ready at a word,
I fear some treachery.

Capt. We will, my lord.

But—

North. Well! say on.

Capt. The odds are something heavy.

North. Heed not for that. One half of yonder band
Would shout for Mary were our backs but turned.
Dost fear the other half?

Capt. My lord!

North. Enough.

Be ready.

Capt. (*aside*) Well; a man can die but once,
But if yon troop move not at one command
Call me no soldier.

(*Enter WINCHESTER, who advances toward NORTH-
UMBERLAND. The duke turns his back upon him.
WINCHESTER holds out to him a folded parchment.*)

Win. By your leave, my lord.

With greeting from her highness.

Ar. (*to Pem.*) Mark you that?

Pem. (*to Ar.*) The train is fired.

North. (*after looking over parchment.* Now heaven grant me
patience—(*to Win.*) Know you of this?

Win. I bear the queen's commands,
Their tenor, my lord duke, concerns me not.

North. Commands!

Win. Commands, my lord.

North. To yield my charge

Here in the tower—to hie me down to Norfolk ;

Leaving—a goodly scheme!—the penalty,

I pray you, for contempt of these “ commands ? ”

Win. A cell in yonder tower.

North. And who dare

Arrest Northumberland ?

Win. Marry, that dare I,

Do you obey—

North. Death ! and the devil ! no. (*To his guards.*)

Stand to your arms. There’s treachery abroad.

(*NORTHUMBERLAND’S retainers level their firelocks, shouting.*)

Soldiers A Dudley, ho !

(*At a sign from WINCHESTER all the troops level their arms at the Northumbrians, shouting.*)

Soldiers Ho ! for the queen !

(*During this JANE has entered, attended by Duke of SUFFOLK, who carries the general’s baton, and others. She springs forward between the levelled firelocks of the two opposing parties, crying out.*)

Jane Peace ! all.

(*She looks round slowly at the troops, who, one by one, recover their arms, the officers returning their swords. When NORTHUMBERLAND is the only one remaining with his sword drawn, she turns to him.*)

Good, my lord Duke, is yours the only blade

Bared in your sovereign’s presence.

North. (*sullenly returning his sword*) By my faith !

Since that your majesty distrusts the wearer

’Twere best—

Jane Distrusts ! Our message, my good lord,

Hath strangely been misread. See you this staff,

(*Taking staff from SUFFOLK and handing it to him*)

'Tis yours. And with it the supreme command,
Of all our forces. Drums! salute your general. (*Drums.*)

North. Your majesty—(*hesitates*) [she not?

Jane (*with a smile, holding out her hand*) Hath answered, hath
The post of honour, and of danger too
Is yours, my lord. We have no higher trust
To grace a subject with.

North. (*controlling himself.*) So be it, madam.
I fear your Grace's trust hath been abused
By some—but let that pass. My lord of Suffolk
Look to your charge, as I will look to mine.

Jane Ah! my lord duke, this is true nobleness.

North Your majesty hath no more loyal subject
Than poor John Dudley. Will it please you give
The word to march?

Jane Ah! my good lords—and you
True English hearts—my heart goes forth with you
Flushed with your pride; chilled with such curdling
As your brave soldier's blood can never know. [fears
GOD be your leader, friends. Your cause is just.
Faith, country, freedom hang upon your arms.
My hopes—my prayers—farewell, farewell, my friends,
Oh! may you come in bloodless triumph home!

Omnes God save the queen!

Win. (*aside*) The queen is saved.
Would 'twere by any other sacrifice.

END OF ACT THREE.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*Room in the Tower, RALPH and ANTHONY putting things in order. In a recess by the door (R.) stand the axe and block covered with loose drapery. Enter GRIFFITH.*

Grif. About, about. An' ye bestir not yourselves our royal mistress will be here and nought prepared.

Anth. In sooth, Master Griffith, 'tis a preparation that likes me not.

Ralph. 'Tis an ill omen.

Grif. Tush—tush. Omens! have we not done with all such superstitious gear?

Anth. Aye, marry, but—

Grif. Omens! quotha. Is it an omen that the court hath so many noble peers that space fails to bestow them?

Ralph. Nay, that is as it may be—(*removes drapery and discovers axe and block*) the Saints preserve us! I mean—look ye Master Griffith an these be not omens—

Grif. Thou art a fool—And yet—(*aside*) axe and block! This falleth crossly (*aloud*) Away with them. The knave headsman shall smart for this. Why told he not. Away I say.

Anth. Marry, that calls for stronger knaves than we.
Ralph Away with the block!—Why the weight of the whole state rests on it.

Grif. A truce with this fool's babbling. Call for—Ha! too late—She comes—(*Enter Usher to door.*)

Usher. The Queen!

Grif. Quick take my cloak—Hang it thus—so—Pray Heaven she see it not. (*Exeunt Grif., Ralph, and Anth, (R) : Enter (L) Jane, Eliz., and Kate.*)

Jane Is this the chamber? Kate, what men were those Passed out but now?

Kate Madam, your faithful Griffith,
 With two of my Lord's men.

Jane Aye! Was it so?
 Methought—go leave me girls, I'd be alone
 A little space. (*Ex. Eliz. and Kate.*) And is it come
 [to this?

And does my sickly fancy see a foe
 In every shadow? 'Tis these awful walls,
 Black with long centuries of lust and crime
 That crush my heart. There's blood on everything,
 The very sunbeams, as the laughing wave
 Flings up their playful shimmer, seem to mock
 The glitter of the axe. Am I a coward?
 I was not wont to tremble much at death
 When life had hope. How welcome were it now
 It will not come—it will not come. And I
 Forbid to die, walled in this living tomb
 Grow chill and bloodless; while the flame of life
 Which glowed so warmly, stifled in dank fumes,
 Like some pale corpse light mocks the name of fire
 And wavers at a breath. Am I a coward?
 I cannot turn my eyes from off the door [silent,
 But awful black-masked forms—Who's there? all

And yet I heard—Who's there I say ? (*Enter Guilf*)
[Thou—Thou !

Guil. Your Highness summoned me ?

Jane Not Highness, Guilford.

No Highness here. Only a poor fond wife ;
So weary, darling, with this lonely load
Of barren state—so weak and terror-torn—
So aching for one clasp of loving arms,
One touch of tender lips. Oh Guilford, Guilford !
Queens should not love.

Guil. (*ironically*)—Or love their equals.

Jane Nay,

That cannot be.

Guil. Truly a mate so lofty

Were far to seek.

Jane Rather a mate once found—

Though in a cot—were, in the finding, throned
So high above all earthly Majesty,
That love alone can gauge that dizzy height,
Or its own humbleness—Ah we may play
At Queening it—may hide our woman's breasts
Under the purple—speak great swelling words
With lips that scarcely quiver—strain our hands,
Our foolish weak white hands to grasp the sceptre,
Aye, or the axe—and all the while—poor heart !
How little Royalty is throbbing there !
Guilford —

Guilf. Your Grace ?

Jane Ah love ! be good to me,

Time runs away so fast. One half-hour more
I must be Queen again. Speak to me dear—
Give me one half-hour's bliss—one word of love—
One little word of comfort, ere I take
My burthen up again—See on my knees—

Unqueened—almost unsexed— like some poor slave
 Suing to her stern Lord—I sue to thee
 For love, for help, for pity—

Guil. Rise madam, rise,
 This is no attitude becomes a Queen
 Before a subject.

Jane It becomes a wife
 Before her husband—Nay, I will not rise
 'Till thou smil'st on me.

Guil. Then I pray your Grace
 To pardon me (*going*)

Jane No, no—thou shalt not go,
 Oh Guilford—canst thou have so soon forgot
 Our scarce sworn vows ?

Guil. I have forgotten, madam,
 All—save my duty to your majesty.

Jane All—Guilford ?

Guil. All. Be it your grace's pleasure
 Upon that duty to command my presence,
 I am obedient.

(*Jane draws herself up silently and motions to the door.*

Guil. bows and exit. Then Jane starts forward)

Jane. Come back ! come back !

Guilford ! (*staggers forward and falls. As she does so, she clutches at the cloak which has been hung over the recess, and pulls it down, falling with her arms on the block. Enter Eliz. and Kate.*)

Kate Your Highness called ?

El. Merciful Powers !
 Our gentle mistress ! Dead !—Now heaven be praised,
 Madam ! speak to me.

Kate God ! What have we here ?
 The headsman's axe ! And that dear, honoured head,
 Is pillowed on the block ! Wake, Madam, wake,

Yet oh, great heaven ! Should she wake to see
This hideous sight, why it would turn her brain
With very horror—

Jane

Guilford !

El. (aside)

Thou kind heaven

Assist us now.

Jane

Guilford, where art thou ?

Kate

Madam.

His Grace—

Jane

Elizabeth ! How cam'st thou here ?

Where is my Lord ?—Ah, I remember now.

*(lets her head droop again upon her arms, which are still
resting on the block.)*

Eliz.

Beseech you, madam—

Jane

Hush ! let me rest awhile,

I'll come anon.

Kate

No, no, not there—not there.

Jane

Aye, here. The friendly metal cools my brow,

Oh ! how it throbs !

El.

Madam, for pity's sake,—

I cannot bear it.

Kate

Pray you come away

To your own chamber.

Jane (rising)

Be it as thou wilt,

*(going, turns and fixes her eyes on the door by which
Guilford has gone out !*

Guilford !

El.

Nay, madam, if you love me !

Jane

Stay !

Tell me Elizabeth—What thing is that

Whereon but now—

Kate

Oh do not look on it.

Dear mistress—come !

Jane

Is it some ghastly dream,

Or hath this weight of sorrow quite broke down
My o'er tasked brain? Why then—Elizabeth,
Wilt answer truly?

El. Do not ask me madam,

I dare not—

Jane Then it is, and yon grim horror,
That awful axe—all, all the bitter past,
Are but the dreams of madness? Is it so?
Am I mad, girls?

El. Oh, my dear mistress!

Kath. Mad!

Now Heaven forefend!

Jane Thou hadst prayed better Kate,
Saying, "Heaven grant it."

El. Dear your Majesty,
Come from this awful place. How can you bear
Yon fearsome sight?

Jane I am not fearful now,
Would that I could be.

(*enter Duke of Suffolk hastily.*)

Suff. Jane! Your Majesty,
I crave your Highness pardon—but affairs
Of pressing urgency—

Jane Speak, father, speak
What sorrow more?

Suff. Ill news from Norfolk, Jane,
Mary eludes our grasp. The Popish Lords
Have raised her standard, and Northumberland
Cries loudly for fresh aid.

Jane Ah, my poor England!
Have not I paid a ransom dear enough
But thy heart too must bleed in civil war.

Suff. Would that were all. Jane there is treason here.

Jane Treason! what treason?

Suff. These fair spoken lords,
Pembroke and Arundel, and all the rest,
Fall off from us. This very day they purpose
To claim free egress hence. They must not have it.
Be firm, my child, be firm.

Jane. Fear not for me,
What more have I to lose ?

(Enter Alymer.)

Alymer. My liege, the lords,
Winchester, Pembroke, Arundel, and others,
Attend your grace's pleasure.

Jane It is well.
Come, father, come.—(*Exit.*)

SCENE 2.—*The Council Chamber. The Lords Arundel, Pembroke, &c., are discovered.*

Pembroke Why this is glorious news. Our council now
Will have some issue (*enter Win.*) Winchester,
Will this content thee ? (*gives letter.*)

Win. This is news indeed,
Now we can strike.

Pem. Aye, at this morning's council.
Fair Mistress Jane hath donned her robes of state
For the last time.

Win. Now, by my honour, Pembroke,
Were it not treason to our rightful Queen
I'd strike for that poor child.

Pem. Pshaw! let her go
Back to her samplers.

- Win.* Hush! she comes.
- Usher (at door)* The Queen.
- [*Enter Jane, Duke of Suffolk, Alymer, &c.*]
- Jane* Fair morrow, good my lords. We greet you all.
We are informed the Lord Northumberland
Craves instant aid. No need we trust to ask
Hath it been sent?
- Pem.* No madam, it hath not.
- Jane* And wherefore not, my Lord?
- Win.* With all submission,
Our powers, madam, in the Tower here
Are somewhat scanty.
- Suff.* By your Lordships leave,
That is my care. The Duke—
- Win.* My Lord of Suffolk
Our errand here is to—
- Jane* The Queen, my lord,
Forget not that.
- Pem.* Nay, marry, with our lives
Jeopardied thus, there were more cause to fear
Too keen remembrance.
- Jane* And am I alone,
The unworthy cause that all these noble peers
Stand in such grievous peril?
- Win.* Madam, the peers
Start not at peril. On the battle-field
We give our lives as freely as we give
Our counsel in the Chamber. But in both
We must be free. We have not freedom here.
We are but hostages—in watch and ward
Held for your safety.
- Pem.* 'Tis too slight a peg
For all our lives to hang on.
- Jane* Earl of Pembroke

Your tongue lacks courtesy. Forgive me, sirs,
 I know your valour and your wisdom too,
 And had no thought to put a slight on them.
 Pray you in turn, believe Jane Dudley's courage
 Needs no unwilling hostages to ward
 Fates' arrows from her breast. Your charge, my
 lords

Is England's queen ; and with her all the hope
 Of England's pure religion and free laws.

Win. Madam, we would not be too rudely bold
 To question with you ; but the time is past,
 For all these pleasant figments. Church and State
 Are specious mottoes, but, translated, both
 Spell but one word, Northumberland. To him
 Both church and state must yield, and we forsooth
 Must hold the ladder while he climbs the throne.

Jane The throne my lord is filled, and she who fills it
 Will hold 'gainst all comers, Pope or Peer,
 For God and for the nation.

Win. Let the nation
 Speak for itself.

Pem. Aye, marry, when we came
 From Syon yonder, was there one bare voice
 Greeted our puppet show ?

Suff. The people feared
 The Lady Mary's wrath.

Win. They feared, my lord,
 The hated power of Northumberland.

Pem. Had they but dared, they would have flung their
 caps
 Roof high for Mary.

Jane. Oh my lords, my lords,
 Speak not so bitterly. Bethink I pray you,
 I never sought the throne.

- Pem.* Then why so keen
To cling to it ?
- Jane* Because God placed me there.
Because—hard duty—(*breaks down.*)
- Ayl.* Now by Him who made me
I can contain no longer. What! my lords,
The chivalry of England, knights and peers
Howl like a pack of hungry wolves at bay
Around a queen—a woman—oh for shame,
Why, my old blood, heaven's servant as I am,
Boils at the infamy.
- Win.* How now Sir Scribe
Thou dos't forget thyself.
- Pem.* Old insolence !
But for thy hoary beard—
- Jane* Silence, Lord Pembroke,
And you old friend be patient. We have done
With tears my lords. Pray you, in briefest words,
Your pleasure with us.
- Win.* Madam, our sole demand
Is freedom for ourselves. Might I but add
A word of friendly counsel, I would pray you
To lay at once that fatal crown aside
And make your peace—
- Jane* My Lord of Winchester
I thank you for your counsel. Your demand
Is granted. You are no hostages more.
Go, my lords, one and all. I stand alone.
You whose high daring framed this enterprize
Look to yourselves, and let its victim fall.
And you, whose craven souls success hath chained,
Find courage to desert a falling cause,
Think not of me. I am your queen no more.
I give you back allegiance, duty, faith,

Your oath to me, your honour to yourselves,
But for this crown, I took it at God's hands,
And to God only will I lay it down.

Win. Madam—(*noise without*).

Pem. How now ! (*Enter Duch Suff.*)

Duch. Sirs, in the name of Heaven
What means this tumult ? All the city bells
Clang wildly out ; while from the hillside yonder
Meseems—but I must dream—there comes the cry
“God save Queen Mary.”

Pem. Ha ! Northumberland ! (*Enter North.*)
Look to yourselves (*Lords come down L.*)

North. So sirs, your work is done ?

Jane My lord you have ill news. Hath blood been shed
In my sad cause ?

North. There's no such thing as blood
In the black hearts that crouch and cringe for gold
To Mary and to Rome.

Duch. Is all then lost ?

Nor. All, Madam, is betrayed. Church—Country—Queen,
Sold by the Judas greed that feigned to kiss
And clutched the price of blood.

Win. This is too much.

Pem. Down with him !

Arun. Draw !

Jane My Lords ! (*throwing herself between them.*)

Nor. Put up your steel

There is my sword (*breaks it*) Let who will master it.

Jane And is all really ended ?

Nor. Judge thyself,

Our ships have struck their flags—our soldiers fled
To Mary's camp. Peasant and peer alike
Fling up their caps for Mary. Not one man
In all broad England, girl, to kneel to thee,

Art answered now?

Jane Why then indeed, God's hand
Itself removes the burthen it imposed
My Lord of Winchester take back the crown,
And may her brows on whom it next shall fall,
Ne'er throb as mine have throbbed.

Duch. Jane, are you mad?

Jane No, mother. Only happy. Dear my lord,
Let us begone. This Tower stifles me.

North. Why thou art mad in truth. Dost think, my
girl,

This palace-prison yields so easily
Its once caught victims?

Jane I had forgot indeed,
And Guilford, what of him? (*Ent. Guil.*) Fly!
Guilford, Fly!

(*Guil.* It is too late. (*Enter Officers.*))

Jane Whom seek you, gentlemen?

Off. I have a warrant, madam, from the Queen
To attach the person of one Mistress Dudley,
Miscalled Queen Jane.

Jane Lady Jane Dudley, sir,
Bows to your warrant. Pray you lead the way.

Off. (to North.) My lord—

North. Enough Sir, yonder lies my sword,
Present it to your mistress. It is worth—
Even in fragments—all the puny blades
Of these pale traitors.

Jane Pray you, gentlemen (*going*)
Let us—

Off. One moment, madam. Lord Guilford Dudley.

J. (returning) No, no, not him. You are in error, Sir,
He never wore the crown. (*to Win.*) 'Tis I alone,
Am the sole culprit.

- Win.* Madam, 'tis not for me
To sit as judge.
- Jane* Nay, then at least, we'll share
Captivity together. Come, dear lord,
'Tis easier than a throne.
- Win.* It cannot be,
I have strict orders, madam.
- Jane* We must—part ?
Oh, sir ! be merciful. Nay, then, at least
One last embrace. Guilford, my own dear love,
Wilt thou not speak to me ? Art angry yet ?
Forgive me, Guilford—husband ! For God's sake,
One loving word. Let us, not part like this.
- Guil.* Would we had never met. (*Jane staggers and falls.*)
Jane—Jane forgive—

END OF ACT IV.

ACT V.

SCENE V. — *Cell in the Tower. Jane asleep on couch.
Elizabeth at window. Sunset.*

El. How fast it darkens ! And to-morrow's dawn
Breaks o'er the scaffold. Red and loweringly
The thick clouds mantle o'er the sinking sun,
Blotting out heaven. Oh my dear, dear mistress,
Thy little wintry day is almost done.
And its pale sun, which, like yon dying orb
Hath never known the glow of summer's noon,
Must sink, like it, in blood. It is too cruel.
Must this mad enterprise of Wyatt's doom
Her guiltless head ? Heaven speed good Master
Aylmer, [*Enter Aylmer.*]
And soften Mary's heart. 'Tis he ! 'Tis he !
Oh sir, what news ?

Ayl.—(*solemnly.*) God's peace upon all here.

El. The salutation of the dying !

Ayl. Aye. (*Music from Chapel.*)

Jane.—(*Asleep.*) Sing on, bright birds.

Ayl. Hush child, your mistress wakes.

Jane.—(*Still sleeping.*) Oh Guilford ! thou hast scared them.

Hark ! again.

That is no nightingale. Sing on. Sing on. [*Wakes.*]

Oh ! how the white wings glisten—Guilford ! Come !
Where am I ?

El. Madam !

J. Was it all a dream ?

Ah Bess ! within these prison walls again,
Methought that they had passed, and angels sang
So sweet a welcome—Why my foolish Bess—
Ah dear old tutor, art thou come to teach me
The last great lesson ?

Ayl. God be praised, my child,
That is not now to learn.

Jane I understand.

Don't cry, my girl. And those white lashes too
All wet with tears ? Why, what a thing is love !
Dear gentle friends, waste not your grief on me.
Were this dread path of death as long and hard
As it is swift and easy, love like this
Might smoothe its passage to the tenderest feet.
So ! are they dry once more ? Why, that is brave.
Tell me, dear Bess, thy brother Reginald,
And thy new sister ? shall I see them yet
Before—to-morrow ? Yes ? Then Gardner's heart
Is not all flint.

El. They wait without, dear madam.

Jane Go fetch them, dear. The time is shortening fast,
And I must watch to-night (*exit El.*). Has't aught
Dear tutor, to thy pupil, ere she sleeps ? [to say

Ayl. Nay, 'tis all said, all but the last sad word.
Ah ! child ; I would my threescore years and ten
Had learned that last great lesson half so well.
Say, shall I leave thee now ?

Jane Not yet, dear friend.

The hand that pointed me the road to heaven
Shall be the last to speed me on the way.

(*Enter Eliz. Kate and Reg.*)

Ah! my sweet Kate, and you, Sir Reginald,
I have so longed to see you, though, alas!
'Tis but a gloomy welcome for a bride.

El. My own dear mistress!

Jane And thy husband, Kate?

Hath he been good to thee? Ha! smiling now,
So, my young bridegroom, we can trust our Kate
Unfearing in thy hands. I knew it, Tylney.
See—Wilt thou wear this foolish ruby here
In memory of thy mistress?

Reg. Oh, my liege—

Jane Hush! Not liege now. Kate, hast e'er thought of me
In thy new happiness? There—I know thou hast.
And sitting by the fire at Christmas-tide,
Needle in hand, hast sometimes called to mind
Our last poor Bradgate sampler, scarce begun?

Kate Oh speak not of it.

Jane Nay, 'tis finished, Kate.

Take it my girl. 'Twill speak to thee of Jane.

Kate Oh, my dear mistress—Reginald, speak then,
The tears are choking me.

Reg. Oh, hear me, madam.

You must not die. I have a galley here
Manned by swift rowers. At the river's mouth
A vessel waits. The darkness favors us.
All is prepared. Trust but yourself to me
And, on my life, before tomorrow's dawn
Breaks on yon hideous scaffold, you shall be
Long leagues beyond pursuit.

Jane Good, faithful Tylney.

And Katherine? What of her?

Kate I will stay here.

Oh mistress, in those dear old Bradgate days

Have we not often played each other's part.
Give me your robe and coif. I'll place me there.
None will suspect.

Jane Why ye are children both.
Poor sister Kate! Dos't think I'd have thy life
Pay penalty for mine? Or you, kind brother,
That I would make a widower of thee,
To live a widow?

Kate Nay, my humble life
Is in no danger. And if—

J. Hush! No more.
My earthly sand is run. But oh! believe me
Were every grain a life, and every life
Of unmixed happiness, not all their sum
Could match the love of one true heart like yours.
I do not say I thank you. There are thanks
That mock at words.

Kate But madam—

J. Hush! my Kate,
I have indeed a sacred charge for thee,
And for thy husband too. To morrow's doom
Hath one sore sting. Oh guard my name, dear
friends
From that black taint of selfish, greedy crime
Which stamps the name usurper. I must die
The traitor's death; and rough, dishonoring hands
Strip this poor body for its nameless grave.
God's will be done. But oh! for pity's sake,
Keep their unhallowed touch from off my fame.
Reg. So help me heaven as I'll maintain thy truth—
Aye, with my life.

J. Nay Reginald. Not so.
Not with, but by thy life. In loyal service,
In steadfast truth, and firm, unswerving faith;

That men may look on it, and looking, know
 Thy mistress was no traitor. Now, farewell,
 Dear loyal friend. Go thou with Reginald
 Till morning, Bess. On my heart Kate—close—close.
 And now farewell.

Kate Nay, you must hear me, madam.
 This is no foolish scheme of our poor brain,
 Lord Winchester himself—

Jane Lord Winchester !

Ayl. Lord Judas !

Jane Kate ! You are not mocking me ?
 Whom said'st thou ?

Reg. Madam, it is so indeed,
 Lord Winchester protects us—

Jane And himself
 Waits yonder, doth he not, to hear the issue
 Of his brave scheme ? Go, bid him hither, Reginald,
(*Exit Reg.*)

Kate You will consent ?

Ayl. Beware.

Jane Content ye both,
 These walls teach wisdom. (*Enter Winchester.*)

Win. I had not presumed
 To have intruded, madam ; yet might I hear
 From your own lips assurance of forgiveness,
 It were a boon—I had not dared to ask.

Jane My lord, on that dim verge where I have stood
 These seven months past, the wrongs of this poor
 life

Scarce seem to need forgiveness. Be the past
 As it had never been.

Win. On my life, Madam

It was no wanton wrong,

Jane I do believe it,

And am content. Have you aught else, my lord,
For these brief hours ?

Win. Too brief for idle words,
You know our project, madam ! 'Tis no folly
Of hair-brained youth, but the well ripened plan
Of skill and power. It was my stern duty,
To sacrifice the victim, Mine the privilege
Of this redemption.

Jane At whose cost, my lord ?
I was foredoomed to suffer. But these sheep
What have they done ?

Kate and Reg. (together) Oh ! Madam—

Jane See, my lord,
These hearts of gold. Think you I rate my life
At such a purchase ?

Win. Madam, have no fear.
They shall not suffer. Yet were it even so,
The sacred cause—

Jane Enough, my lord, enough.
Your former work was all too deftly done.
Is it not so ? Queen Mary wears the crown.
Who sways the sceptre ? Hath my Lord Cardinal
His mission yet ? Hath England kissed the dust
Beneath his sandalled feet ? Not yet ? Aye truly !
Why then there yet is time ? Elizabeth— ?
Too wary sayst thou ? So—some other way—
Some easier tool. Queen Jane at large again,
In Holland—or in Scotland—widowed—free
To dower with empty heart and tinsel crown
Some new adventurer—Luther 'gainst the Pope—
The Hague a check on Spain. Is it not thus
The story runs ?

Win. In truth—

Jane Ah ! truth ! my lord,

Trust me, the time shall come when truth indeed
 Shall cast this husk of crawling policy
 And fling her broad white pinions to the winds,
 Soaring to Heaven; when the Statesman's tongue
 Shall falter like a simple gentleman's
 At words of falsehood; when the priest shall rather
 Deny his Master than dishonour Him
 By subtle twisting of His Holy Word
 To his own earthly ends. Will come! My lord
 For me 'tis here already. The Land of Truth
 Opens its golden gates. Oh trust me, sir,
 No lie shall close them.

Win.

Madam, thou hast conquered.

I would have given—But be it as thou wilt
 I have indeed o'ershadowed thy young life
 With gloom enough. Let heaven protect its own.
 Ho there, without.

Jane

My lord—

Win.

Forgive me, madam.

(*Makes sign to attendant who appears at the door and goes out again.*)

I'll stand no more betwixt thee and the light,
 May it be bright and lasting.

Jane

Thanks, my lord,

And for my poor forgiveness and my prayers
 You have them heartily. (*Enter Feckenham.*) How
 now?

Win.

One moment.

The good lord abbot hath an errand, madam,
 Which needs must be discharged.

Jane

(*To Feckenham.*)

Beseech you, sir,

Discharge it briefly.

Feck.

Daughter, prepare thyself

For happy tidings. Our most gracious Queen

Sends you full pardon.

Jane Pardon !

Ayl. 'Tis some snare.

Jane Nay, do not fear. (*To Feck*) I cannot welcome, sir,
The cruel mercy of a widowed life.
What of my husband ?

Feck. Would thy stubborn heart
Be melted then ?

Jane What ! Guilford ! Pardoned too ?
Free pardon ?

Feck. You will formally renounce
That most unrighteous claim of late put forth
To the succession. And till time and care
Have healed the bleeding wounds of the late riots,
You and your husband will avoid the Court,
And live retired at Groby or at Bradgate.
Jane And is this all ?

Win. No more.

Ayl. No word of Rome ?

Jane Speak, sir ; my faith ?

Feck. I cannot doubt, my daughter,
But that, in gratitude for so much grace
Won by our Holy Church, you will abjure
This obstinate rebellion, and return
Repentant to her arms.

Jane If I refuse ?

Feck. Daughter, I cannot think a heart so loving
Can turn away from such a loving call.

Jane What if I do ?

Win. I pray you do not force
So sad a thought on us.

Jane What if I do ?

Feck. Why then the Church, grieving that one so young
Should be so hardened—must withdraw the grace

She dares not grant to unrepentant sin.

Jane Oh, Guilford! Guilford! Abbot of Westminster,
Think you 'twas worthy of the robe you wear
To mock a dying girl? Your errand's done.

Feck. I wait your answer, madam.

Jane You shall have it.
The chord you struck was tender, sir, and still
Throbs somewhat painfully. But, oh! believe me,
I scarce could welcome een a real grace
With warmer thankfulness.

Win. How mean you, madam?

The grace is real.

Jane Yes, for it frees my heart
From its sole burden. Sir, I have almost prayed
That this dread stigma of a traitor's doom
Might yet be spared me. You have lifted it.
My one offence against the law is purged,
And I shall pass to-morrow to my death
No felon—but a martyr, proud to die.

Feck. And you are fixed, for this foul heresy,
To quit life, husband, all?

Jane No sir, to join
My husband, in that Heaven your loving Church
Lacks power, not will, to close.

Feck. Alas! my daughter,
'Tis thy obstinacy will close the gates
His penitence hath opened.

Jane Penitence!
Priest, you are lying to me!

Feck. Would you hear it
From his own lips?

Jane Now Heaven be merciful!

Feck. (*calling*). Bring in Lord Guilford Dudley.

Ayl: Courage—Courage—

Jane Ah ! This is worse than death. (*Enter Guil.*)

Guil.

Jane !

Jane

Guilford !

Guil.—(*to Feck.*)

Father,

Your promise.

Feck. Shall be kept. (*to Ayl.*) Come, sir—Remember.

(*Exeunt Win. Feck and Ayl.*)

Guil. We are alone. Oh ! Jane, how I have longed
For this sad meeting. Oh my dear wronged love
Can'st thou forgive ?

Jane And dost thou love so little
That thou canst ask ?

Guil.

Angel !

Jane

But tell me, Guilford—

I know it is not so—that thou art true—
Forgive me that I ask ; but I am weak
And sorely tried. Thou hast been firm, dear love ?
True to thy faith—Thy conscience ?

Guil.

Hear me, Jane.

'Twas my ambition and my father's pride—
Curse on them both—that wrought this bitter wrong
To thy most guiltless life. I could not die
With this upon my soul—nay, hear me, love,
There was one means to save thee—only one—
Thy life was made the price of my submission,
And thou shalt live.

Jane

And wouldst thou peril, dear,

Thy soul for me ?

Guil.

Yes, if no other forfeit

Might pay the price.

Jane

And thou dost love me thus !

And I—Oh love, forgive me, take me home
Is Heaven opening this side the grave ?

Guil. And thou wilt live—

Jane

Hush ! Let me dream awhile

On this dear pillow. Yes. I see it all.
 The grey old terrace with its quaint-clipt yews—
 The sunlight sleeping on the broad still ponds
 Where lazy carp lay panting in the shade
 Of the broad lily leaves. See—tis old Plato,
 That wise old monster—with the big round eyes,
 Agape for crumbs. He does not know thee, Guilford,
 And waves a wary tail well out from shore.
 Canst thou bud roses, Guilford ? Thou hast worn
 These in thy breast ere now—Ah ! here comes Ponto,
 How meek he steals o'er the forbidden beds !
 Poor Ponto, wilt thou howl tomorrow night ?

Guil. Jane—

Jane Darling ! If we might but die like this—

Guil. Speak not of death.

Jane Yes, darling we must die—

Tomorrow morning—There, 'tis ended now,
 Love ! wilt thou tell me once again how much
 Thou'dst give for Jane ?

Guil. Life, conscience—honour—all.

Jane How sweet it sounds ! but keep thine honour, dear,
 Aye, and thy conscience. Dost thou think I'd soil
 My glorious Guilford's fame for fifty lives ?

Guil. And we must part ?

Jane (*clinging to him*) Thou'lt not forget me, love ?

In all thy triumph, all thy glory there—
 Mid all the bright-winged angels circling round
 Thou'lt look for Jane ?

Guil. Else were it Heaven for me ?

Hush ! they are come (*enter Win., Feck., Aylm., &c.*)

Jane Oh husband—strengthen me.

Feck. The hour hath struck, my lord. Have you decided ?

Guil. Our part is chosen, Sir.

Win.

To live?

Jane

For ever.

Guil. Aye Jane—for ever.

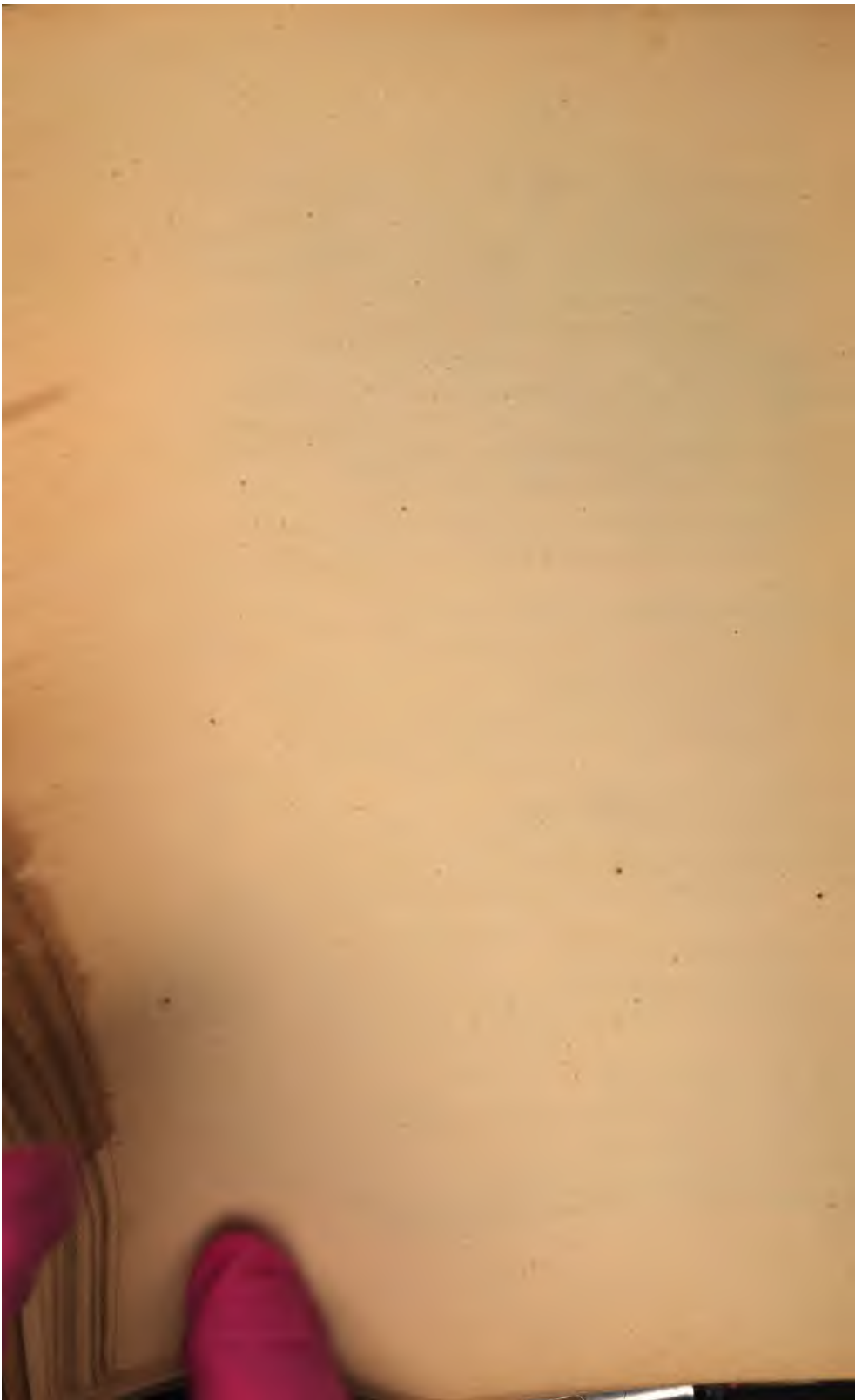
(They embrace silently. Then Guil. motions to Winchester and exeunt omnes, Jane standing silent until all have passed out. Then)

Jane (starting forward) Guilford! Guilford! Gone!

Give me some token, Father, or I fail.

(She falls on her knees. The scene opens and shews visions of the scaffold, &c., with angels hovering above it holding out a crown. Music. Curtain).

THE END.





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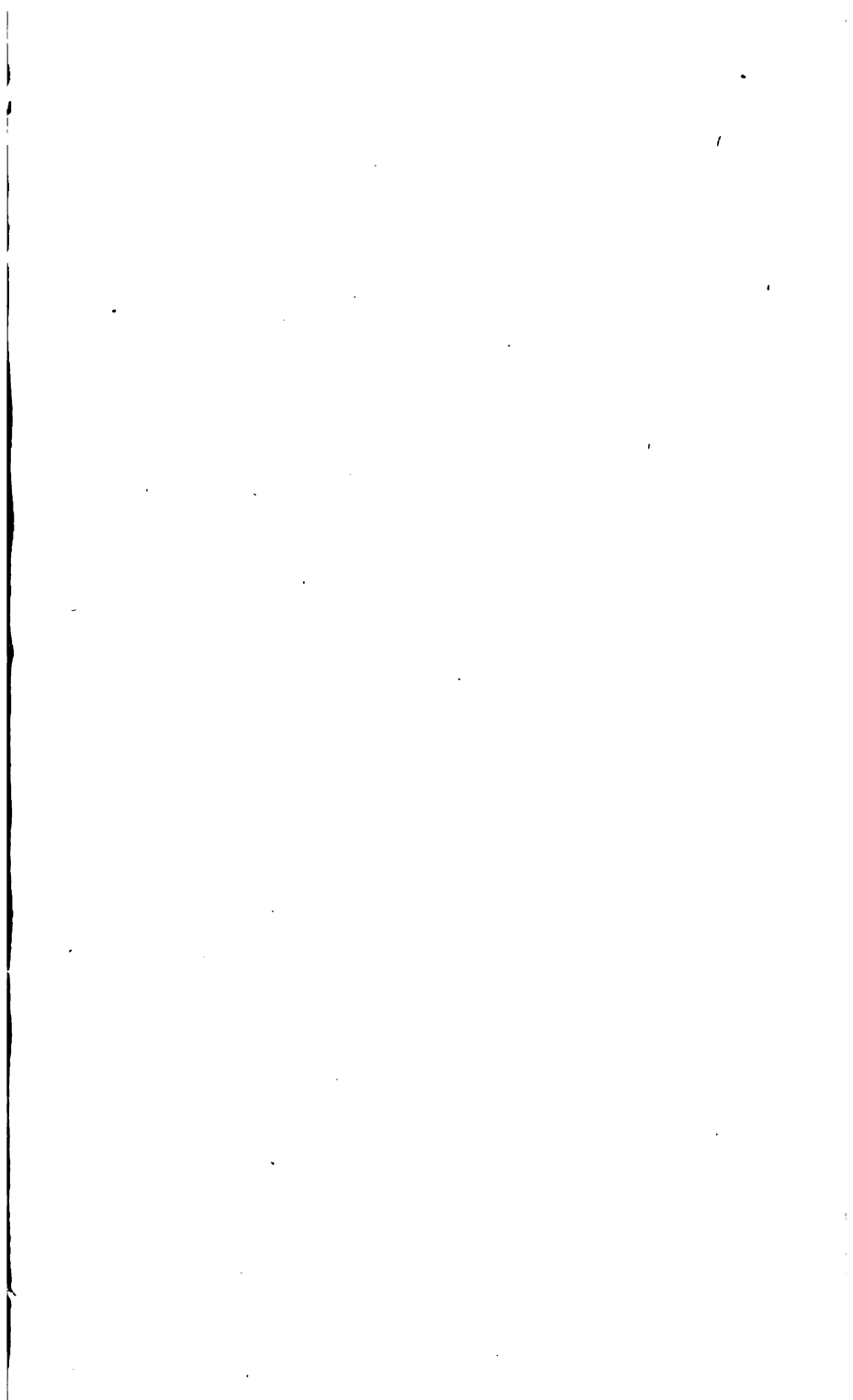
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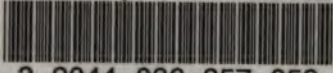
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